

Washington, DC – U.S. Congressman Ciro D. Rodriguez (TX-23) made the following statement Wednesday after President Obama's address on healthcare before a Joint Session of Congress:

"Reform of our healthcare system is more important than it's ever been. During the August Congressional recess, I met with hundreds of people in groups large and small throughout the 23rd Congressional District. I heard stories of hardship and very real concerns about the economic situation our families are facing.

Over and over, people said the same thing: We cannot go down this path any longer. The cost of healthcare will balloon to \$4 trillion nationally by 2016. In our district alone, \$47 million in healthcare costs went unpaid in 2008. More than 25 percent of people in our district have no health insurance. Too many seniors go without and too many families file bankruptcy because of healthcare costs.

These figures are not limited to Democrats or Republicans. Health has no party affiliation, and reform of our healthcare system should not either. The truth is, between the proposals currently in the House and Senate, there is up to 90 percent agreement on the basic elements, including increased competition in the insurance marketplace, stricter consumer protections, eliminating fraud and abuse and curbing long-term costs.

While I believe reform is necessary, I will continue to fight in subsequent versions for better access to healthcare in rural areas and for limits to the taxes imposed on small businesses. And I will continue to regard the public option as one of many that will help us cover more Americans than we do now.

As the President said Wednesday night, 'The time for bickering is over, the time for games has passed and this is the season for action.'

I look forward to working together with my colleagues – Democrat, Republican and Independent – to achieve changes to our system that will make our nation stronger, healthier and more economically sound."

